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In re Application of : OFFICE OF PETITIONS
Terry B. Storm et al :
Application No. 09/804,717 : DECISION ON PETITION
Filed: March 12, 2001 : UNDER 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3)
Attorney Docket No. 01948-051003 :
:

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3), filed March 11, 2003, to accept an unintentionally delayed claim under 35 U.S.C. § 120 for the benefit of priority to prior-filed nonprovisional Application No. 09/304,755, filed May 4, 1999.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration must be filed within **TWO MONTHS** from the mail date of this decision. Note 37 CFR 1.181(f).

A petition for acceptance of a claim for late priority under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3) is only applicable to those applications filed on or after November 29, 2000. Further, the petition is appropriate only after the expiration of the period specified in 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(ii). In addition, the petition under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3) must be accompanied by:

- (1) the reference required by 35 U.S.C. § 120 and 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(i) of the prior-filed application(s), unless previously submitted;¹
- (2) the surcharge set forth in § 1.17(t); and

¹ Any nonprovisional application or international application designating the United States of America claiming the benefit of one or more prior-filed copending applications or international applications designating the United States of America must contain or be amended to contain a reference (amendment to the first line of the specification following the title or in an application data sheet (ADS) to each such prior-filed application, identifying it by application number (consisting of the series code and serial number) or international application number and international filing date filing date and indicating the relationship of the applications. Cross references to other related applications may be made when appropriate (see § 1.14).

(3) a statement that the entire delay between the date the claim was due under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(ii) and the date the claim was filed was unintentional. The Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional.

The reference to the above-noted, prior-filed application was not included in the manner specified in 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(iii) (i.e., in an ADS or in an amendment to the first sentence following the title of the specification) or filed within the period specified in 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(ii).

A reference to add the above-noted, prior-filed application on page one following the first sentence of the specification has been included in an amendment filed on March 11, 2003. However, the amendment is not acceptable as drafted since it improperly incorporates by reference the above-noted, prior-filed application. Petitioner's attention is directed to Dart Industries v. Banner, 636 F.2d 684, 207 USPQ 273 (C.A.D.C. 1980), where the court drew a distinction between a permissible 35 U.S.C. § 120 statement and the impermissible introduction of new matter by way of incorporation by reference in a 35 U.S.C. § 120 statement. The court specifically stated:

Section 120 merely provides a mechanism whereby an application becomes entitled to benefit of the filing date of an earlier application disclosing the same subject matter. Common subject matter must be disclosed, in both applications, either specifically or by an express incorporation-by-reference of prior disclosed subject matter. Nothing in section 120 itself operates to carry forward any disclosure from an earlier application. In re deSeversky, supra at 674, 177 USPQ at 146-147.

Section 120 contains no magical disclosure-augmenting powers able to pierce new matter barriers. It cannot, therefore, "limit" the absolute and express prohibition against new matter contained in section 251.

In order for the incorporation by reference statement to be effective as a proper safeguard against the omission of a portion of a prior application, the incorporation by reference statement must be included in the specification-as-filed, or in an amendment specifically referred to in an oath or declaration executing the application. See In re de Seversky, supra. Note also MPEP 201.06(c).

Accordingly, before the petition under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3) can be granted, a substitute amendment² deleting the incorporation by reference statement, along with a renewed petition under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3), is required.

In order to expedite consideration, petitioner may wish to submit the substitute amendment and renewed petition by facsimile transmission to the number indicated below and to the attention of Karen Creasy.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
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Any questions concerning this matter may be directed to Karen Creasy at (703) 305-8859.

Frances Hicks
Frances Hicks

Petitions Examiner
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Office of the Deputy Commissioner
for Patent Examination Policy

²Note 37 CFR 1.121